

## Fate of Two Airmen On Cuba Trip Veiled

Congressional intervention has failed, so far, to shed more light on the fate of two American flyers believed to have gone on a leaflet-dropping mission over Cuba 15 months ago.

Nor have members of Congress been able to arrange social security payments for the flyers' families.

Senator Robert Byrd, Democrat of West Virginia, said yesterday the Cuban Foreign Ministry had reported, via the Swiss Embassy in Havana, that it never has found any trace of the plane or of pilots Robert Thompson and Robert Swanner.

He said he made the inquiries at the request of Mrs.

Blanche Debolt of Charleston, W. Va., mother of Mr. Thompson. Senator Byrd said she asked him to check out a series of rumors including one that her son was alive and a prisoner in Cuba.

Senator Byrd said State Department officials told him they do not know the fate of the plane and the pilots.

### Lacked Official Status

And Government sources indicated yesterday that Mr. Swanner and Mr. Thompson were on a private mission when they disappeared over Cuba in December, 1961.

Their wives have been unable to collect social security or private insurance benefits because they have no proof that their husbands are dead.

Aides of Senator Smathers, Democrat of Florida, and Representative McIntire, Republican of Maine, said yesterday that they had made no headway in trying to unravel the social security problem as requested by Mrs. Swanner and Mrs. Thompson.

"If they had been on a United States-sponsored flight," said an aide of Senator Smathers, "the United States could declare them officially missing and presumed dead. But they were not on an official flight."

### Colleague Relates Tale

Frank Fiorini of Miami, Fla., has said he left Fort Lauderdale, Fla., with Mr. Thompson, 28, of Charleston, W. Va., and Mr. Swanner, 26, of Miami on December 14, 1961. He said the twin-engined plane went to a secret base in the Bahama Islands, where he got off.

Mr. Fiorini said the men then took off for the Cuban city of Matanzas, where they were to drop leaflets. He said they were doing it "with a green light from the CIA and the Border Patrol."

A Border Patrol spokesman said yesterday "we had absolutely nothing to do with it."

Recently a Cuban refugee told the Pompano Beach Sun-Sentinel that he saw a private airplane downed by Cuban anti-aircraft fire after it flew over Matanzas on December 15, 1961.